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The Garden Culture of Damascus: New Observations Based on the Accounts of ʻAbd Allāh al-Badrī (d. 894/1489) and Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 1135/1740)

La « Culture du Jardin » à Damas : nouvelles observations d'après les récits de ʻAbd Allāh al-Badrī (894/1489) et Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 1135/1740)

«ثقافة الحديقة» في دمشق: ملاحظات جديدة وفق روايات عبد الله البدري (م. ٨٩٤ هـ/١٤٨٩ م) وابن كنعان الصالحي (م. ١١٣٥ هـ/١٧٤٠ م)

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The Garden Culture of Damascus:
New Observations Based on the Accounts of ʻAbd Allāh al-Badrī (d. 894/1489) and Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 1135/1740)

Georgina HAFTEH

Gardens played an important role in the urban development of Damascus and in the emergence of a unique culture of recreation.[1] In the late Mamluk (15th century) and continuing into the Ottoman period (16th-18th centuries), Damascene urban life was manifest in many places including canteens (Mamluk *maqāṣif*), coffeehouses (Ottoman *maqāhī*), public baths, shadow theatres, and pilgrim feasts, all of which shaped Damascus' recreational culture. During "the days of roses" (*ayyām al-ward*) at the beginning of spring people also strolled beyond the city walls into al-Ġūṭa, the rich agricultural land surrounding Damascus, in order to enjoy a picturesque terrain characterised by a mixture of plains, rivers and valleys bordered to the north by steep mountains.

This paper examines the role of gardens and the surrounding landscape in the urban development of Damascus, based primarily on two main sources written by ʻAbd Allāh al-Badrī (d. 894/1489) and Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī, (d. 1135/1740), chosen for their insights into urban and intellectual history, linked by the genre in which they write, *maḥāsin al-Šām* and their shared admiration of the city of Damascus and its beauty. The comparisons that Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī offers are based on the earlier text of ʻAbd Allāh al-Badrī, both provide insights into the intellectual and recreational activities related to open spaces within the city of Damascus to shed light on the evolution of the Damascene urban environment. Considered together, these sources enable a partial reconstruction of the gardens that were the setting for the urban life of Damascus.

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1. I would like to express my gratitude towards Associate Professor Samer Akkach for our fruitful discussions on this topic and for his ongoing support during the preparation of my successfully completed Master's Thesis (University of Damascus, 2011) "Dimašq: al-Mutanazahāt wa ṭaqāfat al-tanazzuh fi al-qarnayn al-sābi' 'ašr w-al-ṭāmin 'ašr," that resulted in the preparation of a map of the most popular Damascene gardens in the 17th-18th Centuries. I conducted this research as a post-graduate student in the University of Adelaide, at the Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture (CAMEA) for a thesis called "Gardens and the Culture of Recreation in the Early Modern Damascus," under the supervision of A/Prof Samer Akkach and Dr. Katharine Bartsch. I am also immensely grateful for Dr. Katharine Bartsch's suggestions and comments and her help in improving the English language of the text. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Jean-Paul Pascual for his comments and continuous assistance on different versions of this paper.

By the time of Ibn Kannān's account, al-Ġūṭa was increasingly developed to offer spaces for social interaction and leisure activities. However, the area set aside for recreation within al-Ġūṭa seems to have been reduced and concentrated in two suburbs: al-Ṣāliḥiyya and al-Ǧisr, with the remainder returned to agricultural purposes. This paper argues that as a result of this concentration it is possible to identify two distinct types of landscape: the natural environment of al-Ġūṭa which was increasingly used for agricultural purposes; and the urban recreational gardens (*mutanazzahāt*) of al-Ṣāliḥiyya and al-Ǧisr which were dominated by public facilities and developed to offer places for social interaction. Both spaces enhanced the intellectual activities associated with the Damascene urban environment and led to the emergence of a unique garden culture.

Recent Scholarship on Damascene Gardens

The garden culture of Damascus should be interpreted in the light of the broader discourse on gardens in the Islamic world and studies of the culture of recreation. Firstly, there is a significant body of scholarship that examines gardens in the Islamic world. This scholarship was primarily inspired by a collection of papers presented to the Dumbarton Oaks Trustees and edited by Elisabeth B. MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen in 1976.[2] Another ten papers were prepared for a conference on the Islamic Garden held at M.I.T and edited by Attilio Petruccioli in 1997.[3] In this category one should also include the studies written by Fairchild D. Ruggles in 2000 and 2008,[4] in addition to Emma Clark's work in 2004 and another edition of Dumbarton Oaks edited by Michel Conan in 2007.[5] These numerous studies offer insight into gardens from Morocco and Moorish Spain to India drawing on geographical, economic, climatic and archaeological data. However, while these publications explore important themes ranging from religious and spiritual interpretations of the paradise garden to practical studies of hydraulics and water reticulation, little attention has been paid to the use of gardens by their occupants or to Damascene gardens specifically.

Secondly, a review of literature focusing on the culture of recreation in the early modern Ottoman Istanbul period shows that there is a recently burgeoning interest in Ottoman garden culture. In 2007 and 2008, Shirine Hamadeh addressed the question as to whether the landscape in 18th century Istanbul served as the site for the rise of an intellectual culture.[6] Meanwhile in 2007, the coffeehouse, the rise of secular print culture, public celebration, and the use of an urban space were addressed in the series of papers exploring the cultural phenomena of the Ottoman Tulip period, which was edited by

2. MacDougall & Ettinghausen 1976.

3. Petruccioli 1997.

4. Ruggles 2000 et 2008.

5. Conan 2007.

6. Hamadeh 2007 et 2008.

Dana Sajdi.[7] One of the most recent contributions to the literature on the 18th century Istanbul garden is an article by Walter Andrews published in 2008.[8] These studies have greatly enhanced our understanding of Ottoman urban space in Istanbul. The Tulip period is presented as a dynamic and vibrant era during which secular recreational activities increased in the gardens, coffeehouses, and other public spaces in Istanbul. These studies are based on chronicles, manuscripts, poetry and other 18th century texts.

There is also a number of significant studies focusing on the recreational culture of Ottoman Damascus. All these studies use the sources of al-Badrī and Ibn Kannān, however each one interprets them for different purposes. Samer Akkach offers a significant insight into the period of early modernity (17th and 18th centuries) in Damascus. His articles published in 2007 and 2010[9] explore Damascus' culture of entertainment with a focus on the Wine of Babel anthology,[10] written by the 17th-18th century historian and Sufi Master 'Abd al-Ġanī al-Nābulusī. By analysing al-Nābulusī poems and other primary sources from the Ottoman period in Damascus, Akkach provided a point of departure to examine the social and urban history of Damascene recreational gardens (*muntazahāt).* One further but important example written by James Grehan in 2007,[11] shows an in-depth exploration of the link between consumption and cultural transformation across the early modern period in Damascus. Furthermore, Muhannad Mubaiḍīn offered a further contribution to scholarship on Ottoman Damascus in 2009. His study constitutes a general survey of the variety of entertainment activities that typically took place in Damascus – including singing, dancing, smoking, drinking coffee, and promenading. This study drew on primarily Arabic sources and the Law-Court Records from Ottoman Damascus.[12]

Despite the available scholarship on gardens in the Islamic world generally, and Damascene gardens in particular, several questions remain unanswered. For instance, how were the Damascene gardens and landscapes divided between natural environments and urban gardens between the late Mamlūk and the Ottoman period in Damascus? How were gardens used in the urban development of Damascus and how did this create a unique culture of recreation? What urban facilities and amenities were coupled with gardens and other open spaces?

This paper seeks to address these questions in order to shed light on this period in Damascus through a comparative study of two accounts: *Nuzhat al-anām* from the late Mamlūk period; and *al-Mawākib al-islāmiyya* from the Ottoman period.[13] The latter (account) cites many descriptions of urban gardens based on *Nuzhat al-anām* two hundered years earlier, allowing us to compare the breadth of this period of interest in the context of

7. Sajdi 2007.

8. Andrews 2008.

9. Akkach 2007 et 2010.

10. Al-Nābulusī, *Burǧ.*

11. Grehan 2007.

12. Mubaiḍīn 2009.

13. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha* ; Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī, *Mawākib.*

urban development by using the genre of *maḥāsin al-Šām* (the beauties of Damascus). This comparison allows us to present a starting point to better understand Damascus' unique culture of entertainment as it was manifest in the gardens within and beyond the city walls.

Definition of Terms

In the accounts of Ibn Kannān and al-Badrī, Damascene recreational gathering and picnics occurred in a specific natural or urban landscape which was identified by different Arabic terms: *bustān, ḥadīqa, rawḍa, ǧunayna* and *muntazah* or *mutanazzah.* A brief clarification of these terms from various Arabic dictionaries is necessary before the main argument commences. According to the lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr and al-Farāhīdī,[14] the original meanings of *ḥadīqā, bustān, rawḍa* and *ǧunayna* are similar with minor differences.

The use of *ḥadīqa* (pl. *ḥadā'iq*) encompasses both *bustān* and *rawḍa*, but *ḥadīqa* must be surrounded by a fence.[15] The term *bustān* (pl. *basātīn*) refers to the same meaning as *ḥadīqa* or *rawḍa;* however *bustān* is mostly associated with fruit; for instance, "there are quince and apple in my *bustān.*"[16] In this regard, we might say that *bustān* is specified for agriculture purpose. On the other hand, *rawḍa* (pl. *rawḍ* or *riyāḍ*) indicate "a land that had water, trees and flowers,"[17] and *ǧunayna* (pl. *ǧanā'in*) had the same meaning as *bustān,* but was a smaller space, for example the Ottoman Law-Court Record mentions that a number of *ǧunayna* form one *bustān.*[18] In addition, *ǧunayna* should have both palms and grapes according to both lexicographers. The mention of these two varieties fruits also links the meaning of *ǧunayna* to a spiritual religious symbol mentioned in the Quran and that refers to the garden of paradise: "Would one of you like to have a garden of palms trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit?"[19] The same symbolic meaning applied to *rawḍa:* "And as for those who had believed and done righteous deeds, they will be in a garden [of Paradise], delighted."[20]

On the other hand, the term *mutanazzah* (pl. *mutanazzahāt*) comes from the root *nazah* and the verb *tanazzah. Tanazzah* originally refers to a person who went by himself to a place with no water or grass, like a desert.[21] However, as Ibn Manẓūr said that "the public commonly used these words incorrectly: they use *tanazzah* when they go on a picnic to *basātīn* and *riyāḍ*,"[22] and this meaning was and still is used among Damascene people. Subsequently, from this review of different Arabic terms, here in the text the use of the word garden covers the meaning of the words *bustān, ḥadīqā, rawḍa* and *ǧunayna.* The

14. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāǧ.*

15. Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *ḥadaq.*

16. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāǧ,* I ; Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *basta.*

17. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāǧ,* XVIII ; Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *rawḍ.*

18. Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *ǧanan* ; Law-Court Records, Damascus, vol. 88, document n°153.

19. *Sūrat al-Baqara*, 266.

20. *Sūrat al-Rūm*, 15.

21. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāǧ,* XXXVI ; Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *nazah.*

22. Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *nazah.*

term *mutanazzah* refers to the recreational garden equipped with a variety of urban and commercial enterprises where the people of Damascus gathered for leisure, entertainment and social interaction.

The Geography of Damascus

To understand the role of gardens in the urban transformation of Damascus it is necessary to begin with a short description of the local geography including the Baradā River which, as the historian Ross Burns states, "If there were no Baradā River, there could be no Damascus."[23] The Baradā River rises from the eastern Anti-Lebanon Mountain at the height of 1100m, in al-Zabadānī plain, then narrows to descend steeply with the river southward which approximately doubles its volume at al-Fīğa Spring. The river continues in a narrow gorge named al-Rabwa valley, where its waters spread out fan-like and divide into six branches: Yazīd and Ṯawrā in the north, are responsible for irrigating al-Ṣāliḥiyya; Baradā, Bānyās and al-Qanawāt in the south, provide water for Kīwān land, the Old City, then the eastern land outside of the walled city (al-Marǧ land); the last two branches are al-Mazzāwī and al-Dārānī, which flow into al-Mazza and Dārayyā villages in the south. After the river divides, it flows southward through Damascus to end in al-ʿUtayba Lake[24] (**fig. 1-2**).

The Baradā River is the scene of urban life in Damascus for inhabitants from different social realms, and it is the main source of water for agricultural purposes as well as providing the provision of vitality for the landscape more generally. The river also enhanced the amenity of the city, and the physical and emotional well-being of the citizens. In 1134/1722, Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī recorded an emotional connection between peasants and ordinary people, and the river in his Damascene chronicle *Yawmiyyāt Šāmiyya* when Baradā suffered from water scarcity. He records the maintenance of the river by the citizens who took their tools and tents and went happily to the spring in al-Zabadānī to spend a week or more until the river flowed again.[25] One should not forget that centuries of human works resulted in the appearance of the branches, which in their turn became fundamental in the creation of a fertile green belt around the walled city of Damascus named *Ġūṭat Dimašq*.[26]

Al-Ġūṭa is bound on three sides: by the gorge of al-Rabwa to the west, Qāsyūn Mountain and Sannīr/al-Qalamūn Mountain (one of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains) to the north, al-Aswad and al-Māniʿ Mountain to the south, while in the east there is the pasture land of al-Marǧ, which is cultivated mostly with grains and it is three times as big as al-Ġūṭa.[27] In

23. Burns 2005, p. xvii-xviii.

24. For detailed information about the Baradā River, see Ibn al-Rāʿī, *Barq*, p. 159-169; Ḫayr 1982, p. 83-108; al-Munaǧǧid 1949, p. 23-24; Nuʿaysa 1968, p. 149-185.

25. Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt*, I, p. 340.

26. According to the lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr, the original meaning of *Ġūṭa* or *al-Ġūṭa* derives from the root *ġawṭ*. *Al-Ġūṭa* is the slope in the ground and it refers to a place with water, trees and plants. *Al-Ġūṭa* is also a name given to the *basātīn* (gardens) that surrounded Damascus in all directions, the Ġūṭa Dimašq (Damascene gardens). See Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *ġawṭ*; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿǧam*, IV, p. 219.

27. Kurd ʿalī 1949, p. 16-17; Reilly 1990, p. 91.

the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī, a notable Syrian scholar and historian, identified the size of al-Ġūṭa area as approximately 40,600 hectares (20km long and 10-15km wide), taking into account the urban space of Damascus city within this area.[28]

The topographical phenomenon of "Ġūṭat Dimašq," irrigated by the Baradā River,[29] has been well-known over the centuries as an intensely cultivated land,[30] and is considered to be an important part of Damascus' economic prosperity. It provides the city with fruits, vegetables and raw materials for artisanal production and represents an important dimension of economic exchange. In addition to its economic importance, al-Ġūṭa was the aesthetic backdrop of the Damascene recreational gatherings (*tanazzuh/sīrān*),[31] where visitors could experience the beauty of Damascus. Throughout history, it was recognized as one of the most famous places to visit in the world. For example, in his text on the beauty of Damascus, *Nuzhat al-anām fī maḥāsin al-Šām*, al-Badrī cites that "Visitors from around the world unanimously agreed that the best four gardens on earth are: Suġd Samarqand, Šiʿb Bawwān, Nahr al-Ubulla, and Ġūṭat Dimašq ... I visited them all and found the most virtuous one to be Ġūṭat Dimašq... It is like paradise that has been adorned and presented on earth."[32]

Representations of the Landscape: the accounts of al-Badrī and Ibn Kannān

Pictorial representations of Damascus' landscape were not famous among Arab historians during the Mamluk and the Ottoman periods. The social life of the city as well as the natural environment tended to be represented through poetry, chronicles, diaries and other texts. This period (Mamluk and the Ottoman) of historiography was enhanced in the 19th century by European travelers visiting Damascus, whose sketches depicted lively impressions of many geographical sites, some of which illustrated people strolling, smoking, chatting, drinking coffee, singing and entertaining in the recreational gardens (*mutanazzahāt*).[33] Moreover, travelers' illustrations of Damascene gardens do not tend to

28. Kurd ʿalī 1949, p. 18.

29. Waterwheels were frequently used for irrigation, and were linked to palaces, houses, religious schools and other structures in the city. For information about the locations of waterwheels in Damascus, see Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 259.

30. Ḥayr 1982, p. 128; Bianquis *et alii* 2010.

31. *Sīrān*, in Damascene dialect comes from the root *sayr* which means stroll and walk, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *sayr.*

32. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha*, p. 309-310. The editor Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ mentioned that Suġd Samarqand, Šiʿb Bawwān and Nahr al-Ubulla are three rivers surrounded by gardens, water and palaces. The translation is done from the origin in Arabic by the author.

"وأجمع سواح الإرض والإقطار، على أنّ منتزّهات الدنيا أربعة، وهي صغد سمرقند، وشعب بوّان، ونهر الإبلة، وغوطة دمشق... رأيتها كلها، فكان فضل غوطة دمشق على الثلاث...كإنها الجنّة وقد زخرفت وصوّرت على وجه الإرض."

33. The British traveler and artist William Henry Bartlett, visited Damascus in 1840 and represented the city's topography in many famous drawings. See Bartlett, Purser & Carne 1836. Unlike Istanbul, the illustrations and accounts of Damascus on the subject of gardens and landscapes in late the Mamluk-Ottoman period, did not trigger to the amount of prints and accounts that emerged about gardens in Istanbul. Many paintings are available about urban centers and landscapes of Istanbul, including those made by Thomas Allom, Robert Walsh, and W.H Bartlett,

portray daily- urban life, and are confined to the 19th century onwards. Therefore, the main descriptions of the city's urban life from the 15th to the 18th centuries can only be traced through the remnant accounts of historians who lived and experienced Damascus during that period. In this article, my interpretation is drawn from two main sources as a point of departure to describe and imagine the Damascene gardens and to provide a basis for further research on the topic.

The first is a 15th-century account from the late Mamluk period, which is an exposition of Damascus' beauties (*maḥāsin al-Šām*). The author is ʻAbd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ǧamāl al-Dimašqī al-Qāhirī al-Šāfiʻī, known as al-Badrī or Abū al-Taqā (d. 894/1489), a scholar, poet and historian. Al-Badrī was born in 847/1443 in Damascus and, in his early years, he worked with his father in trade, later moving to Cairo.[34] Life in Cairo made him nostalgic of Damascus, which led him to write *Nuzhat al-anām fī maḥāsin al-Šām*, a work of praise and admiration of the beauty of Damascus in which he described the city's urban features, architecture, agriculture and recreational gardens (with details about flowers and other plants) as well as representing many aspects of the socio-cultural activities associated with these places.

Years later, during the late 17th to 18th centuries, al-Badrī's account *Nuzhat al-anām* gained him recognition by the scholar and intellectual sufi *šayḫ* Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 1135/1740), who was born in a Damascene elite family in al-Ṣāliḥiyya and grew up under the care of his father, a notable Muslim *šayḫ*, and other prominent *šayḫ*-s in Damascus.[35] Like al-Badrī, he engaged with the theme of the beauties of Damascus (*maḥāsin al-Šām*), and wrote *al-Mawākib al-islāmiyya*, which is the second main source on the gardens of Damascus, on which I rely and dated from the period of the Ottoman Empire.

In *al-Mawākib al-islāmiyya*, Ibn Kannān depicted Damascus' horticulture and the cultivation of trees and flowers. He also cited several descriptions of gardens from al-Badrī's account in the chapter on the beauties of Damascene recreational gardens (*maḥāsin Dimašq al-mutanazahiyya*).[36] At the end of this chapter, he offered considerable information about gardens and landscapes in Damascus and presented the changes and alteration that took place in the gardens' cited in al-Badrī's account of the city in his period.

Subsequently, both these sources enable a partial reconstruction of the gardens that were the setting for the urban life of Damascus. They both used the discourse of *maḥāsin* to exude admiration of the city's beauties – including gardens, landscape, and architectural marvels in addition to the description of the flowers and their medicinal and physical benefits.[37] The word *maḥāsin* comes from *al-ḥusn,* beauty and good, and it is

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and other illustrations from Enderunlu Fazil in the *Hûbânnâme ve Zenânnâme* book. For information on recreational gardens in Istanbul, see Hamadeh 2007; Hamadeh 2008; Necipoglu 1997; Andrews 2008.

34. See Al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'*, XI, p. 40 ; al-Ziriklī, *Aʿlām*, II, p. 66.

35. Al-Murādī, *Silk*, IV, p. 85.

36. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 222.

37. There are numerous amounts of the Damascene beauties which are "difficult to count", al-Badrī said. See also al-Nābulusī, *Burǧ*, p. 103.

"

the opposite of ugliness. [38] *Al-Maḥāsin* is a writing style used by historians, scholars, and poets - who lived in or visited Damascus, experienced its beauty, strolled in its gardens and experienced moments of joy and pleasure. For example, Ibn Kannān declared that his love and attachment to Damascus motivated him to write *al-Mawākib al-islāmiyya*.[39] In both their accounts al-Badrī and Ibn Kannān mention approximately thirty gardens, but they only give details about a limited number of them. In order to describe and create an image of the gardens' evolution throughout the centuries, a textual analysis has been undertaken for the most famous gardens in this paper, namely al-Rabwa, Qaṭya, al-Ǧabha, al-Nayrab, and Bayn al-Nahrayn.

Mutanazzah al-Rabwa

Without a doubt, there were many more recreational gardens than those mentioned in the two historians' texts, and their presence in Damascus can be dated to well before the Mamluk period. As a proof of this, *Nuzhat al-anām* and *al-Mawākib al-islāmiyya* both cite numerous poems written by famous scholars prior to the Mamluk period; poems that invariably represented the garden as a social gathering place for leisure and recreation, and were frequented by people from all walks of life – from the general public to the upper class citizen. One example was written by Tāǧ al-Dīn al-Kindī (d. 613/1217) praising the zankid prince Nūr al-Dīn for bestowing the gift of al-Rabwa to the public:

"Surely when Nūr al-Dīn saw that
in the gardens there are palaces for the rich.
He built the Rabwa as a lofty palace,
an absolute recreational place for the poor." [40]

Later, al-Badrī also described al-Rabwa suburb (*maḥalla*) as one of the Damascene beauties (*maḥāsin*) that overlooks al-Ġūṭa and located far from the walled city to the west. Al-Rabwa suburb was an urban centre containing a mosque, religious schools, a public bath (*ḥammām*), halls (*qā'āt*) with rooms above (*ṭibāq*) and canteens (*maqāṣif*). There is also a proof of the existence of a small bazaar (*suwayqa*) which was filled with a wide selection of daily goods and different food shops. Because of its location on the Baradā River Bank, it was also a popular place for young children to swim and play.[41]

38. Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān,* the root *ḥusn.*

39. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 176.

40. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* 85. The translation is done from the original text in Arabic by author Samer Akkach. See Akkach 2007, 116.

"إن نور الدين لما أن رأى في البساتين قصور الإغنياء
عمر الربوة قصرا شاهقا نـزهة مطـلقة للفـقـراء"

41. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 83-89.

Ibn Kannān, quoting an anonymous historian, claimed that al-Rabwa, had a hundred structures named *tuḫūt*.[42] According to the historian Aḥmad Duhmān, these *tuḫūt* were built above ground level in the al-Rabwa valley, and had a hall (*qāʿa*) surrounded by rooms, similar to *īwān*.[43] Duhmān added, as an example based on Ibn Ṭūlūn, that *tuḫūt* is similar to the wooden hall built by Nūr al-Dīn high in al-Rabwa valley for the recreational activities of poor people.[44] Yet, it is not quite clear what the term *tuḫūt* means, and the statement by Ibn Kannān that al-Rabwa consisted of one-hundred structures seem to be an exaggeration in such a small urban area. It is possible that the term *tuḫūt* refers to benches that in Arabic dialect means beds raised above the ground (**fig. 3-4**).[45]

Additionally, Ibn Kannān referred to a new structure in al-Rabwa called *maqʿad* (pl. *maqāʿid*), which had "wooden planks without leather mats (*anṭāʿ*)," *maqʿad al-Nawfara*, for instance, has also "wooden windows overlooking Banyās River."[46] From his description, these *maqāʿid* might be the kiosks that Michaud and Poujoulat – French historians and travelers – described. On the 23rd of May 1831, they observed that Damascene people were spending the whole day in their kiosks in the gardens along the Baradā River. These kiosks were similar to the ones which existed in Istanbul and were spread along the Bosphorus.[47] Ibn Kannān also noted that there were private *maqāʿid* such as *maqʿad* Ḥusayn Afandī Ibn Qarnaq on al-Qanawāt River and others for the public,[48] where they brought their own quilts, leather mats and even plates, spoons and other eating utensils for recreational days.[49] It may be assumed that some of those *maqāʿid* could be rented by public strollers, while others were privately owned. Also, it seems that the recreational gathering of the elites in *maqāʿid* was segregated from the lower classes, as Ibn Kannān mentioned that there were "*maqāʿid* for elites (*akābir*) in western al-Rabwa."[50]

Compared to the description of al-Rabwa in the Mamlūk period, Ibn Kannān describes the changes that took place in the late 17th century. He recorded that the *maqāʿid* were destroyed in 1080/1669 and he pointed out that all buildings in al-Rabwa which dated

42. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 301.

43. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 289, footnote n°7. See also, Aḥmad Duhmān introduction in Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalāʾid*, p. 11.

44. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 295; al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 86.

45. The term *tuḫūt* is still used in other cities in Syria such as Ḥamā. According to a Ḥamā citizen it refers to a bench or a seat that used to be in the gardens.

46. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 307, footnote n°2.

47. Michaud & Poujoulat 1833, p. 201-202.

48. Ḥusayn Afandī Ibn Muṣṭafā Ibn Ḥasan, known as Ibn Qarnaq al-Dimašqī (d. 1090/1679), was famous for his skills in enchantment, sorcery, magic, witchery and other occult sciences. He became a wealthy man, who had many properties and built his palace and hall (*qāʿa*) in al-Ṣāliḥiyya. He held high official financial positions in the Province and in the managing of many important *waqf*-s such as al-Salīmiyya, al-Sulaymāniyya, al-Ḥaramayn al-Miṣriyyin and Umayyad Mosque. He travelled twenty times to al-Rūm. He was chosen by the pilgrims' elites (*aʿyān al-ḥuǧǧāǧ*) to become the *amīr al-ḥaǧǧ* (the military official, in charge of conducting the pilgrim caravan) after the death of the existing official during this pilgrimage. He travelled one more time to al-Rūm and took Baalbek tax-farming and had many slaves, female and male, and even children. See al-Muḥibbī, *Ḫulāṣat*, II, p. 118-120.

49. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 307.

50. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 307.

from the Mamluk period - were neglected (*ḫurriba*) and vanished (*zāla*).[51] The site was transformed into a place devoid of buildings, and "the only remnants being meadows and *basātīn* on the river bank, owned by people in Dummar and al-Mazza."[52] In other words, al-Rabwa was developed from an urban landscape in the Mamluk period, with gardens and public facilities, to a natural landscape without any structures.

From Canteens (*maqṣaf* pl. *maqāṣif*) to Coffeehouses (*maqhā* pl. *maqāhī*)

Ibn Kannān's account seems to contain the only historical description of the Qaṭya garden, which played a pivotal role in the function of the canteens between the Mamlūk and the Ottoman period. Qaṭya was located near Zāwiya al-Ḥarīrī, south of al-Šaraf and east of al-Rabwā, along al-Qanawāt River and adjacent to the Baradā River. It had a small village (*qaṣaba*),[53] with a boutique (*ḥānūt* pl. *ḥawānīt*).[54] This *ḥānūt* had an upper floor (*ṭibāq*) with four rooms.[55] The canteen in Qaṭya was an urban public facility which served as a space mostly for the idle/unemployed people (*baṭṭālīn*) to gather, spend time and relax.[56] Under Ottoman rule, and after the significant introduction of coffee to Damascus in the middle of the 16th century (940/1534), canteens were turned into coffeehouses,[57] which began to proliferate both inside and outside the walled city of Damascus, all along the banks of the Baradā River.

One of the earliest descriptions of a *maqhā* is that by Balthasar de Monconys, a French diplomat, physician and magistrate. In his diary, written while visiting Damascus on the 13th of May 1647, he described the coffeehouses as follows: "they are all covered, with panels of glass in the middle; there is a beautiful fountain with several jets of water falling into a large square basin; all the benches are covered with rugs and there are theatres

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51. Unfortunately Ibn Kannān did not state the reason for the destruction of the *maqā'id*. In the same year, in 1080/1669-1670, Ibn Ǧum'a al-Maqqār –a historian of the late 17th to early 18th century - stated that Damascus was devastated by a severe plague that resulted in huge damages (*ḍarar*) and led to "a thousand funerals in one day." However, if there is any relation between the two events requires more investigation. See Ibn Ǧum'a, *Bāšāt*, p. 40.

52. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 291-307. At the beginning of the 17th century around 1011/1602, most of the gardens in al-Mazza and al-Rabwa, were put under the control of Kīwān Ibn 'Abd Allāh. He was one of the elite soldiers of the Damascene army (*kubarā' aǧnād al-Šām*), who seized these gardens from their owners either voluntarily or by force, by cheating and colluding with the deputies court, who were paid by Kīwān. See al-Muḥibbī, *Ḫulāṣat*, III, p. 299-301. As noticed, al-Mazza, around 1011/1602 was under Kīwan's control, but it mentioned by Ibn Kannān that it was a village divided among many owners in 1080/1669. Yet, the question is still open about the property of al-Mazza.

53. Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *qaṣab*. Ibn Manẓūr mentioned many definitions of *qaṣaba*: a recently excavated well, or a *qaṣaba* of a location refers to that location's core, or a *qaṣaba* means a village etc. Here, the interpretation of *qaṣaba* as a small village is viable in the context.

54. In Arabic dictionaries the word *ḥāna* pl. *ḥānūt* means a place for drinking wine or a winery. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *ḥnt*. However, the meaning of *ḥanūt* in this context is a shop or boutique, because this meaning is used in the court documentation of the same period.

55. *Aṭbāq* or *ṭibāq* according to Ibn Manẓūr, means layers situated above each other. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *ṭbq*.

56. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib*, I, p. 229-230.

57. See for information about the emergence of coffee: Pascual 1995-96, p. 141-156.

where divert drinkers are entertained by cantors and players of instruments."[58] Later, an engraving by British traveller William Henry Bartlett depicts a variety of coffeehouses on the bank of the Baradā River, opened from all sides, and populated by groups of people sitting beneath shading trellises. These roofs, which block out the sun, are built from light materials such as thatch, and are supported by slender columns of wood. It also shows people sipping coffee and smoking hookahs, whilst appreciating the breeze (**fig. 5**).

Garden Furniture, Features, and Facilities

The gardens (*al-basātīn/al-muntazahāt*), as mentioned, were predominantly places for cultivation and agriculture. However, they also provided opportunities for recreation, some of which were more extravagant than others. They served as urban centres in which were located facilities for leisure, commerce and religion. Al-Rabwa, al-Ǧabha, al-Nayrab, Qaṭya and Bayn al-Nahrayn were the most famous and well equipped recreational gardens according to the descriptions of al-Badrī and Ibn Kannān. In each one of them, there was a mosque, a religious school (*madrasa*), a public bath (*ḥammām*),[59] places for livestock, a market (*suwayqa*),[60] and canteens. The canteens were equipped with lamps and chandeliers, and furnished to meet all visitors' needs from food to accommodation.[61] There were cooks, beverage and fruit sellers, as well as waiters prepared to assist guests with all their needs: leather mats/tablecloths (*anṭā'*), plates, and eating utensils, also pillows, quilts, blankets and cloaks for overnight visitors.[62]

In addition, there was also a lodge (*ḫān*),[63] "shading trellises built without mud" in al-Ǧabha,[64] and a mill in al-Šaqrā.[65] Al-Rabwa was also well-known for its bazaars, with shops offering fried fish, *tannūrī* bread, cooks and ovens. It also had a wide range of fresh produce

58. De Monconys 1665, p. 345. "Ils sont tout couverts, avec des vitres au milieu ; il y a une belle fontaine à plusieurs jets qui tombent dans un grand bassin carré; tous les bancs sont couverts de tapis, et il y a des théâtres où des chantres et joueurs d'instruments divertissent les buveurs." The translation is done from the origin in French by author David Radzinowicz. See Degeorge 2004, p. 176.

59. For instance: Ḥammām al-Nuzha in al-Ǧabha: al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* 80; Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 227-228.

60. Sāḥat Taḥt al-Qal'a –the square under the citadel- was famous for its various types of markets: fur, cloaks and cloth market, copper, sieves and glass market, fruits, vegetables, butchers and nuts market as well as carpenters and tailors shops. See al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 66-67; Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 247.

61. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 86.

62. See al-Ǧabha: al-Badrī, *Nuzha*, p. 79; Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 222-223. See also Qaṭya garden in Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 229-230.

63. A *ḫān* was only mentioned in al-Ǧabha garden. See Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 222-28.

64. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha*, p. 79. There is scant information about the building materials used for the structures in the gardens. Perhaps we could assume that the canteens were constructed using light materials such as thatch. These light structures were probably temporary, and used to build coffeehouses in spring that were demolished in autumn and winter when the garden was returned to agricultural use. Alternatively, it could be interpreted that the owner of the garden rented the place to the *maqāsifī* in the spring and summer when the recreational activities (*tanazzuh/sīrān*) took place. These are unanswered questions that require further research.

65. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 254.

that was available at cheap prices and fifteen sheep were slaughtered at the site daily in addition to the meats that were brought from the city.[66] All these necessities encouraged visitors to stay for as long as a month. "This does not exist in any other country in the world," al-Badrī said.[67] It was all these services that added to the cultural significance of a few gardens as a place of leisure and entertainment.[68]

Gardens and Urban Development

The Development of the Bayn al-Nahrayn Garden

The evolution of a garden culture and the emergence of the coffeehouses, accompanied remarkable changes in the urban fabric of Damascus. According to Ibn Kannān, citing al-Badrī, the recreational garden Bayn al-Nahrayn - which was located in a unique spot at the entrance of the valley on diverging branches of the Baradā River, was an urban compound filled with venues (required) for recreation: houses, palaces (*quṣūr*), *maqā'id*, various types of markets, public baths, and water basins. This site was connected by a bridge (*qanṭara*) to another site full of canteens with plenty of waterwheels. Nearby was al-Farrāyīn alley that had halls (*qā'āt*) with single storey (*ṭibāq*), rooms and corridors (*mamarrāt*). [69] He concludes that this urban centre was completely destroyed in the Ottoman period, and the only remnants are two waterwheels, namely al-Mawlawiyya and Bāb al-Hawā. Even so, in 1117/1705, the site seems to have been restored and the buildings refurbished when the vizier Muḥammād Bāšā Ibn Bayram initiated the construction of a public religious school.[70]

The Alteration of the al-Nayrabayn: The Emergence of *Maqāṣīr*

Another indication of the urban-natural development was the change that occurred to the recreational garden al-Nayrabayn. This was a popular Mamlūk quarter full of many elites' and leaders' houses, and was located east of al-Rabwa on the slope of Mount Qasiyūn.[71] This suburb endured changes during the Ottoman period; some gardens with their urban facilities were neglected. Al-Zumurrud public bath and an unidentified garden

66. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 83-89.

67. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 80-81.

68. It could be assumed that the famous gardens equipped with all facilities were intended for rich people who were able to afford the expenses. However, we do not have more information to enforce that assumption and this require further research.

69. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 69; Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 244-246.

70. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 247. Ḥikmat Ismā'īl in the footnote identified Muḥammād Bāšā Ibn Bayram, an Ottoman vizier who ruled Damascus twice, from 1114/1702 to 1115/1703 and from 1117/1705 to 1118/1706.

71. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 82-83. Al-Nayrabayn was divided into al-Nayrab al-a'lā - situated between Yazīd and Ṯawrā Rivers, and al-Nayrab al-adnā -located between Ṯawrā and Baradā Rivers.

were destroyed and abandoned in 1115/1703.[72] On the other hand, a new construction, namely *maqṣūra (*pl. *maqāṣīr)* emerged in al-Bahnasiyya, a section of al-Nayrab, overlooking Marğat Ğisr Ibn Šawwāš.[73] These *maqāṣīr* are often assumed to have been small houses for people's recreational assembling and they were interspersed with trees, fruits, flowers and water basins.[74] The existence of these small buildings in al-Nayrab contributed to the shaping of the urban fabric of the city during the Ottoman period.

The Alteration of Other Gardens: Ibn Kannān's Observation

Ibn Kannān description of the recreational sites differs to that of al-Badrī. The number of agricultural gardens (natural environment) seems to have increased, whereas the urban facilities for strollers – *maqā'id* for instance – which were common in the Mamluk period appeared to have reduced. Ibn Kannān recorded that open spaces (including Damascene urban public gardens and the surrounding landscape) which were accompanied by commercial and public services were reduced to only two suburbs: al-Ṣāliḥiyya and al-Ğisr. Both were full of public recreational places, coffeehouses, palaces of recreation (*quṣūr al-nuzha*), mosques, religious schools and public baths during the Ottoman period. Where the remnant gardens were turned into *basātīn* (natural landscape), it was rare to find a "*maq'ad* for strollers."[75] Furthermore, al-Rabwa recreational suburb was destroyed and turned into *basatīn* and meadows (*murūğ*) by private owners from Dummar and al-Mazza.[76] Al-Sahm, al-Mayṭūr, al-Lubbād, al-Dahša, al-Ğabha and al-Ḫalḫāl were merely "ruins and names."[77] Al-Ṣaṭrā, as well, was a public space full of buildings (*'amā'ir*), which was transformed into numerous gardens (*basātīn* and *ḥadā'iq*) "without buildings."[78] Similarly, the al-Sahm suburb transitioned from a place full of connected houses to a garden with abundant trees and fruits. Another Mamluk garden named al-Munaybi',[79] vanished in the Ottoman period, and Ibn Kannān assumed this garden to be the same as al-Zuhrabiyya.[80] Ibn Kannān added that the surrounding villages of al-Mazza, Dummar, Ḥarastā, Mnīn, and Barza became lands full of trees, plants and peach.[81] That is to say, the changes not only happened in the city itself but extended to the surrounding villages.

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72. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 231. See also: Ibn Kannān, *Murūğ,* p. 66.

73. The location of al-Bahnasiyya was in the east of al-Rabwā and neighbouring al-Dahša and the bridge (*ğisr*) Ibn Šawwāš still exists near to the mill of Kīwān land (see the attached map).

74. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 81-82; Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 230-231; See also Ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān*, the root *qaṣar*.

75. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 274.

76. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 307.

77. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 289-290.

78. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 285.

79. Al-Munaybi' was irrigated by the Bānyās River and paralleled by al-Qanawāt to the south.

80. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 270. Al-Zuhrabiyya location has the al-Barāmka cemetery for elite' (*a'yān*) tombs, such as Ibn Taymiyya, and used to be a place of Turk residence.

81. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 275.

The Classification of the Gardens' Development

According to the information from Ibn Kannān, we can divide Damascene gardens in the 17th and 18th centuries into two types: the gardens which continued to serve as urban centres, these being al-Ṣāliḥiyya and al-Ǧisr (urban landscape); and the remnant gardens without buildings (*'amā'ir*), which were used for agricultural purposes (natural landscape). While mostly agricultural, these remnants contained a few private gardens in al-Šarafayn and Ṣadr al-Bāz (al-Marǧa) that housed palaces (*quṣūr*).[82] These changes reshaped the map of Damascus landscape. Furthermore, this classification was drawn from Ibn Kannān observations, but the reason for the gardens' transformations remains relatively obscure and needs further research.

The Status of the Gardener

In contrast to Damascus, 18th century Ottoman Istanbul had many royal gardens that were left to the public after the court lost interest in them. The number of public gardens in Istanbul started to increase due to a political agenda: "the state sometimes sought the opening or partial opening of an imperial garden to the public as a solution to repeated instances of public disorder."[83] In Istanbul the gardener (*al-bustanǧī*) was a state official, an employee responsible for the royal gardens, which involved harvesting the crops and rowing the Sultan's imperial barge along Bosphorus River.[84] Royal gardens did not exist in Damascus, where the land property varied between pious endowment (*waqf*), private property (*milk*), and state-owned land (*mīrī*). The gardener (*al-bustānī*) of private property was the owner or renter of the garden, and had the responsibility to plant and harvest the crops each year, and to exploit the profitability of garden (*bustān)*;[85] whereas, if the garden was assigned as a pious endowment, the gardener not only planted and benefitted from the land but also had to transfer a percentage of the generated income towards the *waqf.*

The Culture of Recreation

Although transformations such as those described above occurred in many recreational gardens (*muntazahāt*), one might argue that the continuity of the recreational gathering during the Ottoman period might reflect a response for Damascene urban society's demand for leisure activities. Such gatherings used to be associated with roses blossoming in spring (*ayyām al-ward*),[86] mostly on Saturday and Tuesday. On these days, Damascene citizens of

82. Ḥusayn Bāšā (d. 1094/1682), a famous vizier in Damascus, built his palace in al-Ḫātūniyya, in al-Šaraf. The location of the palace was filled with all kinds of plants and trees, including both native Damascene flora and imported varieties. See al-Muḥibbī, *Ḫulāṣat,* II, p. 124.

83. Hamadeh 2007, p. 287.

84. Necipoglu1997, p. 3.

85. Al-Qāsimī *et alii*, *Qāmūs*, see the letter b, *bustānī.*

86. For the recreational gathering in the days of roses in spring, see al-Ṣālihī, *Yawmiyyāt,* p. 301, 463, 478.

all ranks were ready to burst the boundary of the walled city and go into the vast plain of gardens. Recreational gatherings became a significant pastime due to the opportunities for entertainment and communication. Furthermore, these assembling offered an escape from the daily commitments, as well as an opportunity for the enjoyment of the natural environment.

The recreational urban landscape centre that emerged in al-Ṣāliḥiyya and al-Ǧisr might be a result of the growing consciousness among the public toward a sensual life. This tendency can be noticed in *Burǧ Bābil wa šadū al-balābil,*[87] a compilation of poems about recreational gatherings in Damascene gardens by ʻAbd al-Ġanī al-Nabulusī (d. 1143/1731). ʻAbd al-Ġanī was a Sufi master and historian, who was accompanied by Ibn Kannān in the 17th and 18th centuries. He recorded the names of the gardens where he and his friends used to gather and enjoy the beauty of Damascene nature.[88] These gatherings, mentioned in *Burǧ Bābil,* tended toward sensuality and entertainment life rather than a spiritual experience. One of the poems cited in al-Nabulusī account begins as follows:

Respond to the callers for youthful pleasure and stay with the group,
and replace abstention from love with impious recreation.
And adhere to excessive desires and burning passion, and leave
behind the words of guidance, and stop listening to them.
Only the brave wins the pleasure, while fail
to reach it the coward and the hesitant.
Don't think that happiness will last, nor
will sadness, endless as it may seem, it will come to an end.[89]

The Recreational Gatherings of the Elites

Moreover, it seems that for the elite, the garden culture satisfied both entertainment and educational purposes. Firstly, it was documented by Ibn Kannān, in al-Šarafayn garden in al-Ṣāliḥiyya, that palaces of recreation *(quṣūr al-nuzha*) were owned by the elite patrons."[90] These new types of buildings might indicate the new aspirations of the elite to create leisure gardens within their palaces. For instance, Qaṣr Sīnān in al-Ṣāliḥiyya which assigned for a

87. Al-Nābulusī, *Burǧ*.

88. For information about the Damascene beauties, public recreation, secularity and fame derived from ʻAbd al-Ġanī anthology, see Akkach 2007.

89. Al-Nābulusī, *Burǧ,* 21. The translation from the original text in Arabic was done by author Samer Akkach. See Akkach 2007, p. 111-112. For information on different kinds of leisure and entertainment activities in Damascus during the Ottoman period, see Mubaiḍīn 2009. See also a recent publication about recreational Damascene gardens: Akkach 2010.

"جِب دعاة الصبا ولبّ الجماعة وأبدل النسك في الهوى بالجلاعه
وألزم الشـــطح والهيـام ودع عنـــك كلام النصّوح واترك ســماعه
فاز باللذة الجســـــــــور وما قصر عنها إلا الجبـــــان اللكـــــاعـــه
لا تظن السرور يبقي ولا الحـــزن وإن طال سوف يبدي انقطاعه"

90. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 249-253.

pious endowment of al-Ḥaramayn al-Šarīfayn,[91] and Qaṣr al-Turkumān in al-Ǧisr Quarter.[92] We can also assume from Ibn Kannān, a member of the al-Ṣāliḥiyya elite, that the word 'palaces' (*quṣūr*) was merely a glorification of the al-Ṣāliḥiyya setting. It is likely that those palaces were the same houses that Laurent d'Arvieux, a French traveller and diplomat who visited Damascus in the 17th century, noticed. He said: "Most of the elites in al-Ṣāliḥiyya own houses for recreation practices."[93] The same houses are mentioned by Monconys as follows: "We went with our hosts to a village called Salaié, on the slope of the mountain close to Damascus [...] where we have an excellent view of the city and the whole countryside. We were in a delightful garden with trees, streams and beautiful view. In fact, this village has country houses of the most of important people in the city."[94]

Secondly, Ibn Kannān mentioned in his diary that the elite came to the gardens not only for socializing activities but also for intellectual pursuits.[95] Ibn Kannān himself attended many of these meetings, one of which was on a Saturday in 1138/1726, and took place in the garden of a retired member of the city's elite, near al-Rabwa on a piece of land inherited by Kīwān. The first aim of the gathering was to attend a lecture and to read religious texts; they then ended up citing poems from the work of a notable *šayḫ*. After the session had finished there was an opportunity for strolling, for joy and play in the garden at sunset.[96] We don't have information about whether there were educational gatherings within the public realm (common people). Nonetheless, the anticipation of leisure by the lower classes and elites extended toward sacred places such as shrines and mosques. These places constituted an important aspect of the Damascene urban life, and were mentioned by Ibn Kannān who called them the mosques' promenades (*mutanazzahāt al-ǧawāmiʿ*).[97]

An Ottoman Dynamic: The Appearance of Women

It can be argued that recreational practices in the Ottoman period - especially in the 18th century - seem to have been more socially dynamic than what had been previously believed. For example, Ibn Kannān draws attention to the appearance of women in public, who expressed their individuality in public spaces such as streets, markets (*aswāq*) and gardens. He indicated in his diary in 1125/1713 that legislation banned women from

91. See the architectural description of the palace in: Law-Court Records, Damascus, vol. 60, document n°818, case dated to 1138/1725.

92. Law-Court Records, Damascus, vol. 62, document n°114, case dated to 1141/1728.

93. D'Arvieux 1735: II, p. 458.

94. De Monconys, *Journal,* 343. The translation from the original text in French was done by the author and revised by Jean-Paul Pascual : "Nous fûmes avec nos hôtes à un village dit Salaié au pied de la montagne à un quart de lieue de Damas d'où l'on le voit fort bien et toute la campagne : nous fûmes dans un fort agréable jardin tant pour les arbres et eaux que pour la vue; c'est en effet en ce village que les principaux de la ville, ont leur maison de plaisance."

95. Ibn Kannān's diary indicates that mostof these elite gatherings were held on Saturdays and Tuesdays.

96. Ibn Kannān, *Yawmīyyāt,* p. 367.

97. Ibn Kannān, *Mawākib,* I, p. 248.

smoking in the markets.[98] Another example comes from a barber and Damascene chronicler, al-Budayrī al-Ḥallāq who describes a normal picnic with his friends, which took place on 26th of February (1163/1750) in one of the Damascene gardens:

> "We went out with our lovely friends on an excursion to al-Šaraf al-aʿlā that overlookes al-Marğa, on Thursday, the 18th of Rabiʿ I, when the flowers began to bloom. We sat overlooking al-Marğa and Takiyya al-Salīmiyya, and we were surprised by the number of women, more than men, sitting on the river bank, eating, sipping coffee and smoking just as men do. And this was something we had never heard of or seen until we witnessed it ourselves."[99]

This description can be considered as a clue to that the recreational culture of Damascus, was appreciated by both genders in the Ottoman period. At the same period in Istanbul, an illustration (**fig. 6**) shows women enjoying an excursion in the garden of Kağıthane, outside the private courtyards of their houses. These illustrations, along with al-Budayrī's description, indicate that women appeared in public gardens alongside men for their leisure activities in this period.

Is there a quadripartite garden style in Damascus?

The historical records of Islamic gardens in Spain, India, Istanbul and south-Asia give many perspectives of the quadripartite garden style, a well-known Persian landscape legacy called *chārbāgh*.[100] *Chārbāgh* design refers to a garden divided into four parts by water canals and pedestrian walkways. Unfortunately, the visual representation of the Damascene gardens by travellers, as well as the historical descriptions in diaries, poems and texts from the late Mamlūk-Ottoman period, do not provide adequate information on Damascene gardens and the design of surrounding landscapes. However, beyond the Takiyya al-Sulaymāniyya was a famous Mamlūk recreational garden named al-Ǧabha, and overlooking two branches of the Baradā River, the Banyās and al-Qanawāt, that could possibly have had a quadripartite layout. Al-Badrī described al-Ǧabha as a square site, located on the Barada river side, with willows, poplars, and walnut trees, "divided into cultivated areas (*maġras*) surrounded by water canals from the four directions with fountains, ponds, water-jets, and waterwheels."[101] Yet, this is just one indication of its shape and we do not have much definitive information about the design of the Damascene gardens, which might also have involved natural and

98. Ibn Kannān, *Yawmīyyāt,* p. 103.

99. Al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādiṯ*, p. 193-194. The translation from the origin in Arabic is done by author.
"في يوم الخميس ثامن عشر ربيع الإول خرجنا إلى سيران بناحية الشرف المطل على المرجة مع بعض أحبابنا. وكان الوقت في مبادئ خروج الزهر، وجلسنا مطلين على المرجة والتكية السليمية، وإذا بالنساء أكثر من الرجال جالسين على شفير النهر، وهم على أكل وشرب وقهوة وتتن. كما تفعل الرجال، وهذا شيء ما سمعنا بأنه وقع نظيره حتى شاهدناه..."

100. For information on the Islamic garden, see MacDougall & Ettinghausen 1976; Ruggles 2000; Clark 2004; Ruggles 2008; Blair 2009.

101. Al-Badrī, *Nuzha,* p. 79.

spontaneously grown green spaces which were divided between owners. This point, however, requires further research and study.

Conclusion

In the 19th century, al-Ṣāliḥiyya continued to be a famous place for promenading which was enlivened by a rich leisure ritual. Travellers Michaud and Poujoulat illustrated al-Ṣāliḥiyya as "one of the most delightful places on the Earth, where we find the most charming gardens, the most amiable nature of the land of Damascus; the rich habitants of the holy city have chosen these preferred areas to build their kiosks."[102] At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Damascene recreational gatherings continued vigorously and the garden culture seems to have proliferated to cover specific places on certain days annually. The historian Nuʿmān al-Qaṣāṭilī reported that the recreational assembling which began in March was associated with 'the days of roses', as mentioned before, and lasted for seven Tuesdays, seven Saturdays and five Thursdays. The mixed gender was again perceived at that time, since he mentioned that the recreational places were used by "thousands of men and women."[103]

Regarding the coffee houses, a census which had been done in 1820 mentioned 122 coffeehouses in the city.[104] While according to al-Qaṣāṭilī, at the end of the 19th century, there were 110 coffeehouses scattered in different places throughout Damascus. New urban facilities called *kāzīnāt* emerged at the same time. These *kāzīnāt* referred to luxurious coffeehouses, located in Sūq al-Ḫayl, al-Marǧa and al-Ṣūfāniyya, where a cup of coffee could cost up to twenty *bāra*, which was almost three times the price charged at the other coffeehouses in the city.[105] The main entertainment coffeehouses for all inhabitants were: al-Manāḫliyya, al-Ǧunayna, al-ʿAmāra, al-Ǧāwīš and al-Raṭl, where the price of the coffee was around five *bārāt*.

The proliferation of the coffeehouses along the Baradā River bears witness of an increasing demand for recreational activities. In Karl Baedeker's guide, the Damascene coffeehouses are described as follows: "The coffeehouses in Damascus are the largest in the east... Most are located near the river bank. They contain large rooms with small tables and even smaller chairs, or benches on which the inhabitants of Damascus sit cross-legged near to his hookah smoking while playing backgammon."[106] The Damascene sense of beauty is

102. Michaud & Poujoulat 1833, p. 206. The translation from the original text in French was done by the author and revised by Jean-Paul Pascual : "Et pourtant Salahhié peut passer pour un des endroits les plus délicieux de la terre. Là se voient les plus charmans jardins, la plus aimable nature du pays de Damas; les riches habitans de la sainte ville ont choisi ces lieux de préférence pour y bâtir leurs kiosques."

103. Al-Qaṣāṭilī, *Rawḍa*, p. 115-116.

104. Pascual 2001, p. 184.

105. Al-Qaṣāṭilī, *Rawḍa,* p. 109. In 1890, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bik Sāmī mentioned 122 coffeehouses which varied between large and small sizes, and hight and low prices, see Sāmī, *Qawl*, p. 93.

106. Baedeker 1893, p. 309. The translation from the original text in French was done by the author and revised by Jean-Paul Pascual : "les cafés de Damas sont les plus grands d'Orient (...) La plupart sont situés au bord d'un cours

reflected in the urban facilities of the landscape, Baedeker mentioned that the design of al-Manāḫliyya includes trees and plants illuminated by multicoloured light, which became a beautiful view at night.[107]

Later, al-ʿAllāf, a historian active at the beginning of the 20th century, described the Damascene recreational demand. The garden culture expanded to cover every single day of the week beginning in March and varied between gardens, villages and sacred places.[108] People played different kinds of games for amusement, fun and pleasure. Whereas the educational gatherings among elite did not follow any specific time, *šayḫ*-s used to carry their breakfast and tea and bring books to read and discuss. [109]

During the second half of 19th century, especially in the period of Reforms (*Tanẓīmāt*) there were several signs for a movement towards modernisation in the city. Some of these new developments were to partly strengthen the Baradā River banks to prevent destruction from flooding, and to cover a part of the river to create al-Marǧa square. Important streets were paved and extended, gas powered street lights were added, and new buildings such as the town hall and a hotel were constructed. These developments were added to the already recognised changes such as the creation of the Damascus-Beirut road, the establishment of the railway station at the end of the century, and the emergence of carriages. [110] These carriages (*ʿarabāt*) began to appear in the last quarter of the 19th century, as mentioned by al-ʿAllāf, pulled by horses that were stationed in al-Marǧa square in order to wait for wealthy and foreign clientele who came to stroll in the city and the country. These carriages were not that essential among the villagers who used their livestock to commute. Later on the elites and rich people had their own carriages for transportation between the city and the surrounding villages for promenades and other purposes. [111]

In conclusion, *Nuzhat al-anām fī maḥāsin al-Šām* and *al-Mawākib al-islāmiyya fī-l-mamālik wa-l-maḥāsin al-šāmiyya* were both examples of the literary genre prainsing Damascene beauty, and both were considering the intellectual, cultural and aesthetic values of Damascus. The examination and comparison of the two texts shows the role of the Damascene gardens in the urban development, where the city landscape was divided into natural environment and urban gardens. Here, the blossoming of a unique garden culture was manifested in a heightened social commitment towards entertainment, leisure, and intellectual pursuits. This cultural emergence was enhanced by the urban facilities that accompanied gardens, which themselves were established to fulfill social demand.

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d'eau. Ce sont de grandes salles ou des jardins avec une quantité de petites tables et de chaises plus petites encore, ou des bancs sur lesquels l'habitant de Damas s'assied les jambes croisées pour fumer son narghilé en jouant au trictrac."

107. Baedeker 1893, p. 319.

108. For information about which days and which places that were used for recreational practices, see al-ʿAllāf, *Dimašq*, p. 171.

109. Al-ʿAllāf, *Dimašq*, p. 208-210. For information about the games that were famous among public and young people see the previous source page 212-217.

110. Weber 2009.

111. Al-ʿAllāf, *Dimašq*, p. 35.

List of the gardens mentioned in al-Badrī and Ibn Kannān accounts

	Garden name	Al-Badrī	Ibn Kannān
1	Baġā (al-)		cite
2	Bāšā (al-)		cite
3	Bahnasiyya (al-)	cite	cite
4	Bahrān	cite	
5	Barza	cite	cite
6	Baṣṣārū	cite	
7	Bayn al-Nahrayn	cite	cite
8	Bayt al-Abyāt		cite
9	Bayt Lahyā		cite
10	Burǧ al-Rūs		cite
11	Dahša (al-)		cite
12	Dārayā	cite	cite
13	Dayr Murrān		cite
14	Dummār		cite
15	Ḥāǧib (al-)		cite
16	Ḫalḫāl (al-)	cite	cite
17	Ḥarastā		cite
18J	Ǧabha (al-)	cite	cite
19	Ǧarīf (al-)		cite
20	Ǧisr al-abyaḍ (al-)		cite
21	Kafarsūsiyya	cite	
22	Kīwān	cite	cite
23	Laylakī (al-)	cite	
24	Maqrā	cite	cite
25	Marǧat Dimašq	cite	
26	Marǧ (al-)		cite
27	Marǧ al-Daḥdāḥ		cite
28	Marǧ al-šayḫ Arslān	cite	
29	Marǧ al-Sulṭān	cite	
30	Mayṭūr (al-)	cite	cite
31	Mazza (al-)	cite	
32	Mnīn village	cite	
33	Munaybi‘ (al-)	cite	cite
34	Našwa (al-)		cite
35	Nayrab al-adnā/al-A‘lā (al-)	cite	cite
36	Qaṭya	cite	cite
37	Rabwa (al-)	cite	cite
38	Ṣadr al-Bāz		cite
39	Sahm (al-)	cite	cite
40	Šaraf (al-)	cite	cite
41	Ṣaṭrā (al-)		cite
42	Saylūn (al-)	cite	
43	Sitt al-Šām	cite	
44	Taḥt al-Qal‘a	cite	
45	Ušnān Mill (al-)		cite

46	Wādī al-taḥtānī (al-)	cite	
47	Yaldā	cite	
49	Zabadānī (al-)		cite
50	Zuhrābiyya (al-)		cite

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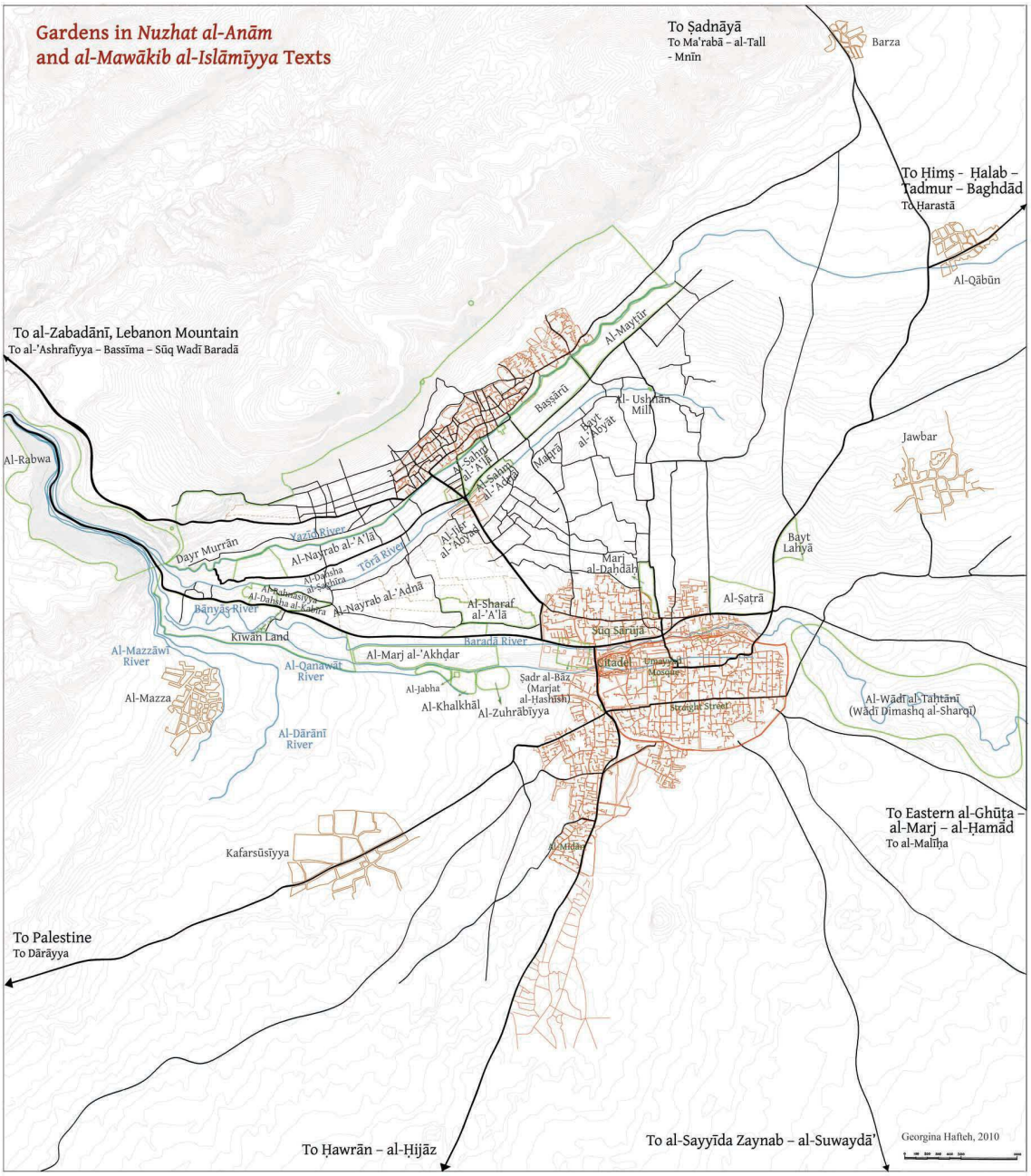

Gardens in Nuzhat al-Anām
and al-Mawākib al-Islāmīyya Texts
To Ṣadnāyā
To Ma'rabā – al-Tall
- Mnīn
Barza
To Ḥimṣ - Ḥalab –
Tadmur – Baghdād
To Harastā
Al-Qābūn
To al-Zabadānī, Lebanon Mountain
To al-'Ashrafīyya – Bassīma – Sūq Wadī Baradā
Al-Rabwa
Al-Mayṭūr
Basṣārū
Al- Ushtān
Mill
Jawbar
Bayt Lahyā
Dayr Murrān
Yazīd River
Al-Nayrab al-'A'lā
Tōrā River
Al-Dahsha al-Sughra
Al-Dahsha al-Kabīra
Banyās River
Al-Nayrab al-'Adnā
Al-Sharaf al-'A'lā
Marj al-Dahdāh
Al-Ṣaṭrā
Sūq Sārūjā
Kīwān Land
Baradā River
Al-Mazzāwī River
Al-Marj al-'Akhḍar
Al-Qanawāt River
Al-Mazza
Al-Jabha
Al-Khalkhāl
Al-Zuhrābīyya
Ṣadr al-Bāz (Marjat al-Ḥashīsh)
Citadel
Umayyad Mosque
Straight Street
Al-Wādī al-Taḥtānī (Wādī Dimashq al-Sharqī)
Al-Dārānī River
Kafarsūsīyya
al-Midān
To Eastern al-Ghūṭa –
al-Marj – al-Ḥamād
To al-Malīḥa
To Palestine
To Dārāyya
To Ḥawrān – al-Ḥijāz
To al-Sayyīda Zaynab – al-Suwaydā'
Georgina Hafteh, 2010

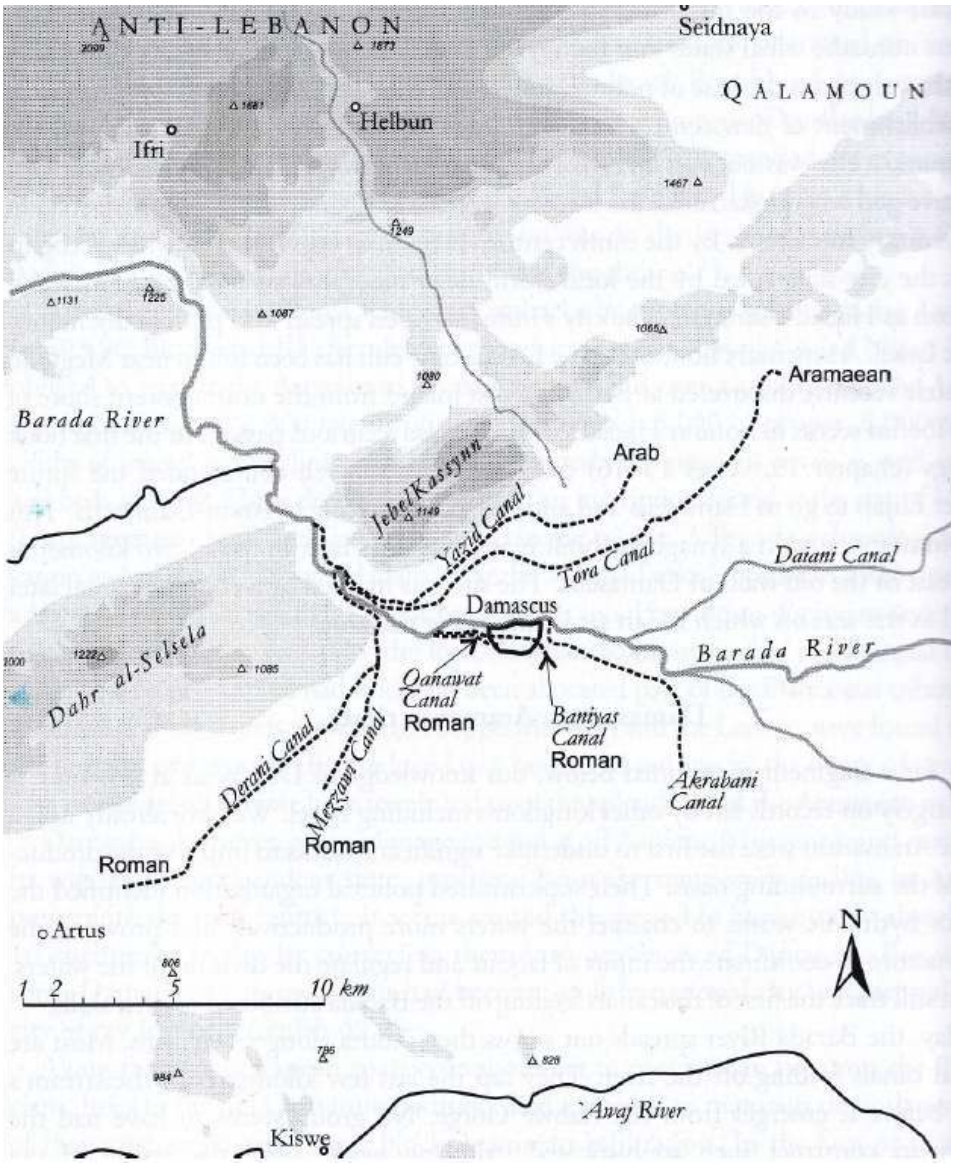
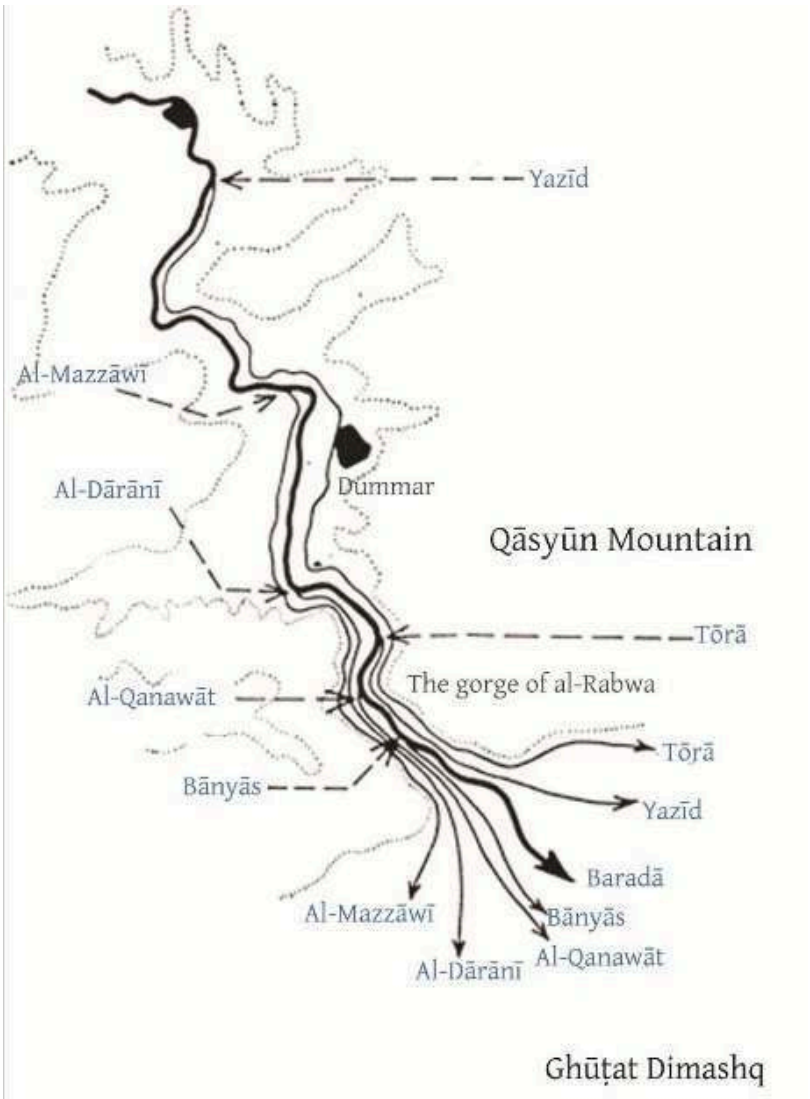


Fig. 1 - The branches of Baradā (Burns 2005).



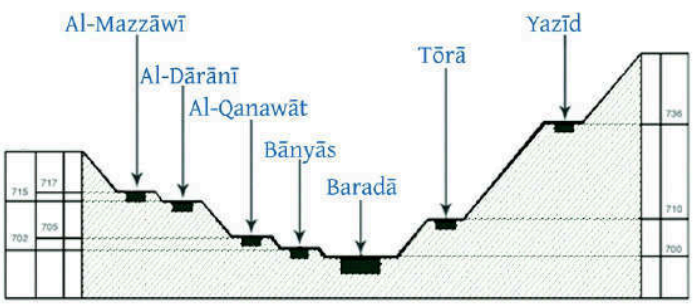


Fig. 2 - The main branches of the Baradā upstream from al-Rabwa (Ḫayr 1982).

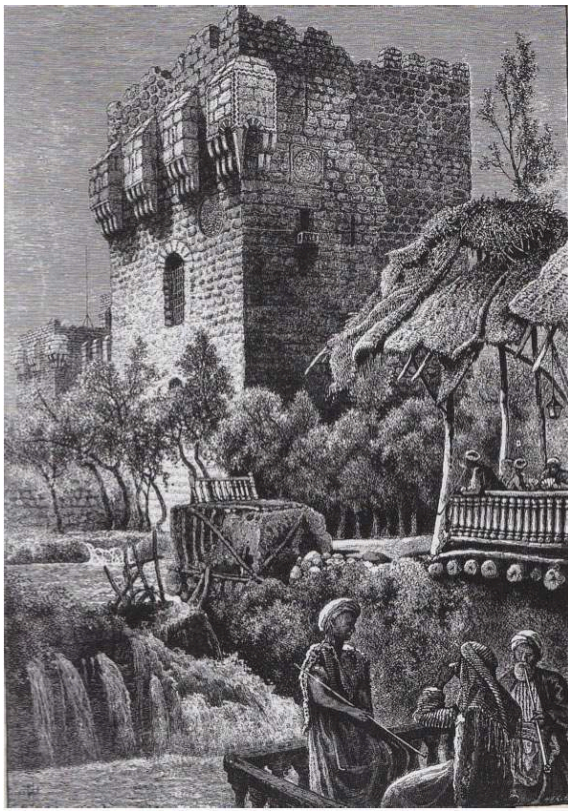


Fig. 3 - The northeast tower of the Damascene citadel in the late 19th century engraving (Degeorge 2004). One could assume that the bench in the middle of the photo is *taḫt.*

Fig. 4 - The Takiyya al-Sulaymāniyya and the Baradā River seen from the west in a late 19th century print (Degeorge 2004). One could assume that the bench/seat in the photo is what we we called *taḫt.*

Fig. 5 - William Henry Bartlett, *Cafés in Damascus*, engraved on steel by S. Smith. 1836 (www.antique-prints.de).

Fig. 6 - A. The imperial palace of Sa'dabad and the garden of Kağıthane. B. An anonymous garden scene (1720s?) (Hamadeh 2008).